

HISTORY

211-6

TERM ESSAY

THE ECONOMY OF
THE DOUKHOBORS.

PAUL HOODICOFF

A - really a fine and
persuasive piece of
work. Your paper
is well written although
one might suggest that your
conclusions could
be more meaningful
if your general bias
in favor of the
evident -
something that
becomes the
propagandist
but not of the
history which
you should
review. Blakey's
look on the
effective use of
footnoting.

FOR MR. MUZZO.

1968

Introduction.

Before an attempt can be made to analyze the economy of a group of people, their history should be viewed. The name Doukhotob was given with a satirical twist to a group of pacifistic people by pope Amroce of the Russian Orthodox Church. The name was originally meant to infer that they fight against the spirit of God; but the Doukhotobors themselves accepted it as signifying that they fight, not against, but for and with the Spirit.

Folklore has it that the spiritual history of the Doukhotob faith goes back to the three Hebrew youths - Hannaniah, Azariah and Michael, who, as is said in the Bible - being constant in their faith to the living God, - refused to kneel and worship the golden images made by Nebuchadnezzar; and for their refusal were cast into the midst of a burning furnace, but the Spirit of God delivered them and they were unharmed.*1.

Their beliefs emerged to prominence in the second half of the eighteenth century. Appealing to the humble and poor, peasants

*1 - Jubilee Program

- Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Doukhotobors
in Canada.

- Jubilee Committee - 1949. Page 1

and labourers, an organization of hospitable and practical people emerged. They renounced man made images or "idols" and believed that God dwells in every man and that each generation has Christ in a mild form. On this belief, leaders were chosen. Insisting that there is only one Church of God, the Doukhobors denounced the Russian Orthodox Church, their popes, and stopped paying tribute to the Tsar.

In 1887, Peter Vasilivich Verigin became the acknowledged leader of the majority of Doukhobors. Fake charges were proclaimed against Verigin and he was exiled to Siberia for sixteen years of his life. While in Siberia, Verigin began reading the works of Leo Tolstoy. Under Verigin, the Doukhobors beliefs underwent a tremendous change. This change was the total renunciation of militarism. They denied tobacco, wine, meat, and military service. Following their belief that it is a sin to kill, they burned all their arms on June 29, 1895. This step brought severe persecution. Hearing of the persecution, Tolstoy informed the Society of Friends in England. Soon funds began pouring in to aid this minority group.

The Doukhobors asked to migrate from

Russia to a British colony. On March 8, 1898, permission was granted and a party of 1,126 set sail for Cyprus. [This was originally chosen for their settlement because funds were not sufficient to transfer to any other colony.] Later, it became possible to send two parties of over 4,000 to Canada. They arrived in January 1899. Soon the Cyprus party joined them and approximately 7,500 Doukhobor immigrants arrived in Canada.

Canada, being a young nation in need of settlers, saw the Doukhobors as a boost to the population. By an Order-in-Council in 1898, the Doukhobors were noted as a pacifistic group of people. This was perhaps the main reason why Canada was accepted.

Known as the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood, a name chosen by Lordly (for his exemplary Christian life, subsequently in Canada, Peter V. Verigin merited the title "Lordly")^{*2} in 1896, the Doukhobors arrived and set up homesteads in Saskatchewan. To secure the lands, an oath of allegiance

*2 - A Doukhobor History, page 3.

- Paul A. Verigin

- based on a speech given by John J. Verigin in Toronto in February, 1963.

was required. Having denounced the Russian Tsar, they saw no difference in accepting an English counterpart - this was what they were striving against. Failing to secure the land by refusing to give allegiance, the government began taking their lands away. Therefore, in 1907, Kovalev, who arrived from Siberia to Canada in December of 1902, began looking for prospects further westward and decided on a beautiful forested spot in British Columbia. This was the present area of Brilliant, Ootsekemia, Grand Forks and Pass Creek.

Pooling all their acquired wealth, which amounted to several hundred thousand dollars and borrowing several hundreds of thousands from loan and mortgage companies, pledging land still held in Saskatchewan and the newly acquired land in British Columbia as collateral, the Doukhobors secured the land. Paying as high as \$52.50 an acre for some of the land, 8,800 acres were purchased in the first years. Later this acreage kept increasing and by 1937, 20,000 acres were held. Of this acreage,

there was approximately 2,800 acres in Brilliant and 2,200 acres in Pass Creek. (In purchasing this land, oaths of allegiance were not required.)

In 1908, a pioneer group of a hundred men and a few women, under Nicholas Zebroff, left Saskatchewan to start developing the new land. Arriving in May of 1908, a foundation of prosperity and of phenomenal increase in economy was started.

Part I

Upon arrival to the vast area of land which was in the process of being purchased, the immediate problem which faced them was the setting up of residences. Although Zebroff went to Grand Forks, a small number of men were left in the vicinity of Ooteshemia. Across from Kinnaird, then known as Waterloo, shacks had been set up by prior inhabitants. There was a small village there at one time but now it was almost abandoned. The only inhabitants left were Mr. Teetor and Mr. Landis, along with their families. A friendship soon developed between them and the Doukhobors.

Remodeling the run down shacks until they were habitable, the Doukhobors moved in. Logging operations were soon started and at the same time, a ferry was made joining Waterloo and Ooteshemia. Later, in 1910, this ferry was closed and another established at Brilliant.

Once logging operations were under way, a small sawmill was erected. The sawmill, being very small and without a planer, nevertheless took up all the logs the men could feed it.

At this time, early in 1908, the surrounding area was also very petite. - ~~small~~?
Castlegar was composed of a C.P.R. station, a general store, a hotel, and a section house which used to house the railway crews. Robson had a few residents who were farmers and Ross Creek's sole inhabitants were two German trappers. Following their motto, "toil and peaceful life" the Douthabor lands soon became an Eden which was admired and envied by the rest of British Columbia. - ~~small~~?

Part II

The sawmill, small and compact, produced just enough logs to make a start in establishing homes for future arrivals. A leather shop and a blacksmith shop were put up to meet the immediate problems of the sawmill and workers. During this time and until 1912, over 5,000 Doukhobors migrated to British Columbia.

Before the Spring of 1910, another small sawmill was put up in Ooteshenka and one at Brilliant. The sawmill in Brilliant was erected in what the Doukhobors called Komeua (Rocky Place.) There, in a short while, a blacksmith shop, a leather shop, a boarding house for housing workers, a steam boiler for running the sawmill, a pump house and a flour mill were erected. This is below the present site of the bridge, which spans the Kootenay, at Brilliant. The cement foundations can still be seen although the buildings are gone. Here the Doukhobors made boards for construction of buildings and pipes for irrigation systems which were being put into effect.

Since the sawmills were clearing the

land and communication from village to village was necessary, roads, built solely by Doukhobors, began to spring up. The first road, from Ooteshenia to Brilliant was looked on as a great accomplishment for it was made by hand. Shovels, picks, and horses were the only equipment available. Later, more roads were constructed and finally, a road to Pass Creek was put through. This was a single lane road due to the amount of forest which was very abundant in the area. On these roads, mainly the older men and children worked. Since much of the youth was away working in sawmills or on outside jobs bringing money to the community, the old men could work at their leisure and the children could do the light chores such as gathering the twigs and roots. Everyone works according to his ability and strength *3

Many of the Doukhobors were sick from tuberculosis and sickness acquired in Russia through persecution. Seeing the need for hygiene, hardly began constructing a hospital. In 1909, the hospital was completed under the care of a Russian doctor and their

*3 - ibid.

own self-taught nurses; treatment of the ill was undertaken. In a short while, the administration began to crumble and shortly thereafter, the hospital was closed down. Later it was remodeled and made into a house. It is still standing today - where?

Also at this time, once land was cleared and tree stumps burned, the Daulton Community began planting orchards. By 1910, 400 acres of trees were planted and 2,800 acres were yet to be cleared of forest.*⁴ Ordering seedlings three years of age and planting them fifteen feet apart, thousands and thousands of evenly spaced trees began to bloom. Irrigated by rain and cultivated regularly, hopes of a great fruit factory, to take the excess fruit, began to shape. Renting a small factory in Nelson, the Daultons began producing jam. Since their own orchards were yet fruitless, fruit was bought from the surrounding farmers. From the fertile Creston Basin to the Fraser Valley, fruit began pouring into the factory. Daulton workers were sent to the farmers to hasten the fruit to the factory and insure its arrival.

*⁴ - Nelson Daily News
Wednesday, January 5, 1910

this factory was operated until the one at Brilliant was built.

Irrigation was the next problem which faced the Doukhobors. Now that the orchards were planted, much more water than an occasional rainstorm was required. Soon the Kootenay was spotted with water-pumps. By 1910, \$250,000 was invested into an irrigation plant at Brilliant. "A million-gallon reservoir was built on the Kootenay River near Brilliant. Fed by water from mountain springs and torrents, as well as water pumped directly from the river, the plant not only piped water to the villages but later became one of the major power plants in the Province.*5 This was not sufficient to irrigate the district so plans for a major irrigation district began forming. In 1919, the Doukhobors asked the Government in Victoria for a loan of \$50,000 to put through an irrigation system. They were turned down. Taxes were placed on the orchards which were not yet providing a source of income. Paying taxes for trees which might die

*5-Doukhobors at War

- John P. Zubeck, M.A., Ph.D.
- Patricia Anne Selberg, O.B.E., Ph.D.
- Ryerson Press, Toronto Canada, -1952.

without water would be very unprofitable. The Darkhobors had to put through an irrigation system to make any profit. The present system ran from the Kootenay, near the site of the Brilliant, over the golf course and to Ooteshemia. was not sufficient.

Shortly the Pass Creek irrigation system was established, with a three foot pipe leading from the reservoir in Pass Creek to the Raspberry Village and from there, a two foot pipe to Ooteshemia. At the Brilliant Bridge, which was already constructed, the pipe was divided in half and placed on either side of the bridge to maintain balance. It was extended uphill to Ooteshemia but due to the grade of the land and the amount of land to be irrigated, the water again was insufficient. If the pressure was fully turned on, there was danger of bursting the pipe and as a result, the orchards were deprived. By 1920, this system was completed. The pipes and rods for the irrigation system were made by the Darkhobors in their sawmills and blacksmith shops. These pipes were dynamited many times by unknown persons and after being repaired many times, were just left. Today much of the system

is slowly rotting where they lay.

With just a ferry joining the growing centers of Brilliant and Potoshenia, a bridge was needed. An attempt was made to construct one across the Kootenay but it failed (this is below the present site of the bridge.) Late in the fall, a huge wooden cribbing was made but when the Spring floods came, it was washed out. Two years later, in 1913, again construction was started. Consulting the government and receiving a grant of \$20,000 and investing \$30,000 of their own, the Doukhobors hired an engineer to supervise the construction of the bridge. This time there was success and a bridge, which still stands today, was constructed.

In 1915, the jam factory known as "The Kootenay Columbia Preserving Jam Factory" was constructed. Now the factory rented in Nelson was closed down and all the production was moved to Brilliant. Although the orchards were not yet producing fruit and all the fruit was imported, the factory had already had a respectable name for itself. Classed as the "best jam in the west" by many officials, the jam was exported all over Canada. During World War I,

the community donated jam and money to aid the war victims. To help war victims, orphans and widows, the community donates several railroad cars loaded with jam and \$10,000 to the Red Cross *6

Later, as the orchards began producing fruit, the factory exported a great abundance of fruit jam and large profits were reaped. This phenomenal output continued until 1944 when the entire Brilliant Community went up in flames. The loss was estimated at \$85,000.

*6 ibid.

Part III

The year 1917 was a very important one for the Doukhobors. In this year, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (C.C.U.B.) was incorporated as a limited company. It was capitalized at a \$1,000,000 although its total assets were several times that figure. The leader, Hardly, issued shares to himself and thirteen other executive members of the enterprise. The C.C.U.B. prospered although under a heavy load of indebtedness.*7 Then on October 29, 1924, Peter Hardly Verigin was killed in a mysterious train explosion. The cause and responsibility for the explosion was never determined. Now that Hardly was dead, the Doukhobors were without a leader. Still managing to follow the ways of their leader, the Doukhobors kept operating at a profit (although it was quickly showing down) until 1928. A year prior to this, 1927, Peter-Petrovich Verigin (Christikov) emigrated from Russia and assumed his father's place of leadership. In a short while, the Doukhobor beliefs went under a great change.

During their leaderless period, many of the Doukhobors left the Community. It was also during this time that much of

*7- ibid

the Community assets mysteriously disappeared.

In 1925, seizure of Doukhobor lands for failure to send their children to school took a large toll in the Doukhobor Communities. To compensate for the loss, a \$350,000 loan was made from the Bank of Commerce through the National Trust Company. The turning point had arrived. The economy had slowly begun to recede.

Peter Chistikov Verigin came to Canada on October 11, 1927, and assumed the leadership of the Doukhobors. Under him, the C.C.O.B. underwent tremendous change. Since the Community was under a great financial stress, many of the members had lost faith in paying out the debt and started leaving the Community. Chistikov, nevertheless, had full confidence in himself and his people and began looking for ways of raising money. He believed this to be possible if the hard communal life could be changed. Appealing to all the Doukhobors in Canada, including the Independents, (those which lived outside the Community) many meetings were called to discuss ways of raising money. Chistikov asked the people to give personal donations and said that this

money was refundable at any time. In a few months after his arrival, \$358,000 had been gathered. This went toward reducing the debts of the Community.

A slight increase in economy was noted but this soon died due to the depression which hit Canada. Losing many of their followers to the more fanatical Sons of Freedom, the Doukhobors, as a result, lost money. The loan companies began demanding the money which the Community never had. Heavy losses suffered in fires of unknown origin, along with the depression, never aided matters any. The Community was unable to pay the taxes on the percentage interest. Christikov was arrested and an attempt was made to deport him. The mortgage companies began to foreclose.

Despite the efforts made by Christikov, foreclosure actions were taken in 1938. In 1938, foreclosure actions in British Columbia against the C.C.V.B. by the National Trust, which was the agent and appointed receiver of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and the Sun Life Assurance Company began, for costs of \$168,283.21 and \$192,297.51 respectively. A major part of the Community assets in B.C.

were sold at knock down prices. . . . The government took action and paid Sun Life's claims in full and the National Trusts' claims, in behalf of the Bank of Commerce, in part. The rest was paid later. Thus the government assumed trusteeship over 19,000 acres of land, together with buildings and faculties owned by the C.C.V.B. for very little. . . . The government gained control of the land in which the Doukhobors invested millions of dollars plus countless hours of work for \$296,500. At present these lands would be worth over a million dollars. *8 The government required a rental fee of the Doukhobors. This could not be understood for they, the Doukhobors, had bought the land, worked the land and many had died on the land. How could they pay rent for their own land?

Before his death on February 11, 1939, Christikov ended the communal way of life and began forming a Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ. The work of

*8 - Report of the Doukhobor Research Committee
- Harry B. Hawthorn, Chairman and editor
- U.B.C., 1952.

organizing this was unfinished by Chistikov due to his death. It is under this pattern of life that the Doukhobors live ~~under~~ today.

Chistikov set up many of the community buildings such as schools and meeting places, built a library, built a packing house in Brilliant and also added a section to the factory. "Under the supervision of Paul Ivanovich Biriukov - a close friend of Leo Tolstoy, who arrived in Canada together with Peter Petrovich - a central library is organized, schools are opened, the young people attend meetings where singing and oratory are practiced. *9. A major Doukhobor youth movement was instigated and interest grew in their heritage and the attendance grew in English schools. All the provinces which had Doukhobors felt this movement. Through Chistikov's efforts, the youth became aware of their Canadian mode of life. This eventually led to the registrations of births, marriages and deaths.

In the year Chistikov died, World War II broke out. Fearing conscription, the Doukhobors

*9 - Ibid.

banded closer together. As the conscription question began to die down, many of the Doukhobors left the Community. Soon the Doukhobor dwellings and the land began to deteriorate. No longer owning the land, the determination and pride for it was gone. It should also be noted that not only the Doukhobor Community, but also much of the surrounding area began to deteriorate. Farmers as far away as Wilson began operating at losses. There was too much acid in the soil for anything to grow abundantly. Was this due to the fact that the Trail Smelter was increasing due to wartime production and as a result, the unguarded fumes also increasing?

The final blow came on December 13, 1944. On this cold bleak night, the great establishment at Brilliant went up in smoke. The potentially million dollar business was completely demolished. The jam factory, the general store, the large packing house, a service station and garage were burned. Now there is nothing left but the memories. Can they be forgotten soon?

Conclusion

Overlooking the beautiful land of Brilliant and Otestkema is a tomb. Here lie two great leaders of the Dookhobor people, Peter Vashilovich Verigin the kindly and Peter Petrovich Verigin Christikov. Through the efforts of the former, the Dookhobors got their start in Canada and through the latter, began living in today's pattern.

Today, many of the Dookhobors eat meat, drink alcohol and many own firearms. Since this is centennial year in Canada, the Dookhobors, as a contribution to world peace, should gather all their firearms and, once again, set an example by turning them

The following letter is copied from the original copy.

Relations between the government and the Dawkobors were poor in this period. Herdly recant this letter as an example with no intentions of carrying out the truth. After the government read this letter, ministers were sent to negotiate.

LETTER BY DOUKHOBORS

Peter Verigin
President

Mr. W. Koffinoff
Manager

J. F. Mosley?
Sec. Treas

February 5th, 1922.

A Mass Meeting was held at the Doukhobor Colonies in British Columbia, at which an important question had been discussed regarding the standing of economical conditions of the Community.

It was resolved, in view of bad soil-land and unsteady climate such as dry spells and undue frosts that the Colonies cannot exist any longer. On top of bad soil and climate conditions, there is a South, an excessive high tax as destructive whip, especially after the war. Majority of the people have handed their opinion to liquidate the material property in B.C., also in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to sell their lands and inventory stock, to pay up all the debt and to join the proletariat, that is to say, a vagrant working class, because the farming does not pay as the

income cannot cover the expenses. But the Government is laying a Press on all the Dawkhobors from all sources.

The Dawkhobors are paying very big taxes in B.C. such as road taxes and others. When the roads are improved in the Dawkhobor locations, then the Government allows this work to outside people. Not a cent returns for all the road taxes that the Dawkhobors pay. By this fact, the Government boycotts the Dawkhobors. The Dawkhobors build and improve all the roads at their colonies by their own men as the Government does not pay anything for this work. The Dawkhobors are here in B.C. for 15 years and in this time, have paid about \$150,000 in taxes and received at the most, somewhere around ~~\$25,000~~ ^{\$5,000} ~~tax~~ but have built enough roads and improvements during 15 years for \$100,000. A bridge at Brilliant is built across the Kootenay River valued \$50,000 for which the government paid \$20,000. The Canadian laws are - but the Government should build bridges and roads. This is said only in principal that

the Government should build and pay, but the facts are that the bridges and roads are built from the taxes that are collected from Settlers. There are over 5,000 Doukhobors that are living in B.C. and if they have paid \$150,000 in taxes for 15 years, they surely deserve half the amount to be spent on roads and bridges, whereas the Government has only spent \$25,000. This, of course, includes what was received for the bridge at Brilliant.

The Community has sent some of their Deputies to Victoria several times, also had written notices that Government roads and bridges are required to be built at the Doukhobor Settlements. The Government either kept silent or else informed us that it has no means and the Deputies from the Doukhobors had been received at Victoria as dock people and their claims had been listened to with silent smile.

In the year of 1914, the Doukhobors had made an appeal to the Government at Victoria, asking a loan of \$50,000 to put through an irrigation system at Brilliant. The Government had refused and

stated that it had no money, but the Doukhobors are rich and can support the irrigation on their own account. This could be proved by the original replies from the Minister of Agriculture at Victoria. The orchards at different colonies are taxed each year very highly, but they do not bring any income because they remain without any supply of water and it is likely that the fruit trees, which are from 5 to 12 years of age, are going to die shortly.

It is very pitiful that the Doukhobors are obliged to drop such a good estate and to follow the proletariat in Canada. There is one question left unsolved - what to do with the children? Peter Verigin, leader of the Doukhobors Community, offers to kill all children up to 10 years of age and to throw them into the Columbia River, and to act alike with the sick people and the elderly ones which cannot work. Pretty nearly half of the people - fanatics respecting Verigin agree with his offer to free themselves from

Interviews

- (1) Magistrate Wm. Evans
- magistrate of Nelson
- (2) Wm Hoodkoff
- Resident of Castlegar
- (3) Mike Hoodkoff
- Chauffeur to Peter Lordly Verigin
- Secretary in C.C.O.B.
- (4) Tom Ogloff
- Resident of Castlegar
- (5) Pete Rilkoff
Resident of Rosthern.

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- 1963

- (8) Jubilee Program
- Celebrating the fiftieth Anniversary
of Doukhobors in Canada
- Jubilee Committee, 1949.

106 - A view of Brilliant from the bridge side.
- The factory, the boarding house and the warehouse can be seen.

107 - the saw factory in Brilliant.

123 - Logging operations in Coateshann.
- A donkey engine can be seen pulling stumps.

1 - Peter the Herdly's tomb overlooking Brilliant.
- This is mostly made out of marble.

2 - The arrival of Chistikov to British Columbia.
- The people are gathered at Herdly's tomb.

PICTURES.

109 - A grain elevator situated in Brilliant.

121 - A reservoir on Indian Flats.

This water was used by the villages on the Flats and was also held as a reserve.

112 - Komenz (Rocky Place)

This picture shows the sawmill which was located here.

104 - The Brilliant Bridge on completion.

108 - A three story warehouse in Brilliant.

This was used as a company house for the factory workers. The ground story was used as a kitchen.

100 - Peter the Lordly's house in Brilliant.

This house overlooks the Brilliant Bridge.
Below, Lee River can be seen.